



29 April 2020

Dear Christians at St. John's Burt,

On Monday of this week Governor Reynolds began the process of reopening 77 counties in Iowa that have had little to no COVID-19 exposure. In her proclamation Governor Reynolds permitted churches to reopen under the condition that they follow basic social distancing and sanitation measures.

The elders and Pastor Cowell met on Tuesday of this week to discuss the possibility of returning to the Divine Service on Sunday morning. We took into consideration the fact that Kossuth and surrounding counties currently have little to no spread of COVID-19. We also considered our ability to follow recommended social distancing and sanitation procedures in the distribution of the Word and Sacrament of God in our building.

For these reasons the elders have decided to begin offering the Divine Service again beginning **this Sunday, May 3rd**. However, we would like for you to take these points into consideration as we return to St. John's:

- 1. If the coronavirus puts your health at advanced risk due to your age or underlying health conditions, please stay home!** You are in no way despising the Sabbath by taking this special precaution to protect your health. All of our previously offered at-home resources and services in the back of church, at stjohsburt.org, and on Facebook and YouTube will continue into the summer.
- 2. If you are sick or have spent time in another state or high-risk county in Iowa, please stay home!** This is the best way you can love your neighbor at this time.
- 3.** If you do come to church on Sunday, there will be bulletins placed on the pews where you can sit. This is for the purpose of maintaining distance between each other during the service. You can put your offering in the plate in the back of church. We will, obviously, be forgoing any handshaking or social time after church.
- 4.** Holy Communion will be distributed one at a time and care will be taken to avoid contact with one another. If you come on Sunday and you are nervous about the health risk of receiving the Lord's Supper, you should feel no judgement for remaining in your pew.
- 5.** Sunday School and adult Bible class will be postponed for at least the next couple weeks.



As we return to church we thank God that He has given us leaders and doctors who are able to make informed decisions about our bodily health. We also recognize that Jesus the Great Physician has to offer what we need most. Therefore the Word and Sacrament distributed to the public assembly is rightly at the top of our list in the order of reopening our state.

Continue to watch for announcements and updates during this ever-changing situation. Continue to pray for the sick, those who care for the sick, and all others adversely affected by this virus. Continue to seek to love your neighbor in any way you can in this time of need. Above all else, have faith that while all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass, and the grass withers, and the flower falls: the Word of the Lord remains forever.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Thomas Cowell
Jeff Schutjer
Jerry Koestler
Boyd Shipler
Tony Hatten